

CLAIMS

What is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A telephone answering system comprising:

5 a main telephone answering device for answering telephone calls, said main telephone answering device comprising a first control circuit for controlling operations at said main telephone answering machine, a first communications circuit, and a storage medium for storing incoming telephone messages;

an extension answering device which cannot initiate a telephone call

10 said extension answering device comprising a second control circuit for controlling operations at said extension answering device, and a second communications circuit which communicates with said first communications circuit, said second control circuit causing said extension answering device to retrieve stored incoming messages from said main telephone answering device
15 through said first and second communications circuits, and for reproducing said retrieved stored incoming messages.

2. A telephone answering system as in claim 1 wherein said storage medium stores an outgoing message and said second control circuit causes said extension telephone answering device to communicate with said first control
20 circuit to cause said main telephone answering device to store an outgoing message in said storage medium.

3. A telephone answering system as in claim 1 wherein said second control circuit causes said extension answering device to send commands to said main telephone answering device and if said first control circuit of said main telephone answering device cannot process said commands, said first control
5 circuit causes said main telephone answering device to send a busy signal to said extension answering device.

4. A telephone answering system as in claim 1 wherein said main telephone answering device further comprises a first audio reproducing circuit and said extension answering device further comprises a second audio
10 reproducing telephone circuit, and wherein said first control circuit causes said main telephone answering device to answer an incoming telephone and in response thereto reproduce an outgoing message stored in said storage medium over a telephone line, said first control circuit also causing said main telephone device to communicate said outgoing message to said extension answering
15 device, said second control circuit causing said extension answering device to reproduce said communicated outgoing message through said second audio reproducing circuit.

5. A telephone answering system as in claim 4 wherein said second control circuit causes said extension answering device to reproduce said
20 communicated outgoing message without intervention of a user at said extension answering device.

6. A telephone answering system as in claim 4 wherein said first control circuit causes said main telephone answering machine to also reproduce

said outgoing message stored in said storage medium through said first audio reproducing circuit.

7. A telephone answering system as in claim 4 wherein said first control circuit causes said main telephone answering device to store incoming telephone messages in said storage medium after said outgoing message is played, said first control circuit causing said main telephone answering device to communicate incoming telephone messages to said extension telephone answering device, said second control circuit causing said extension telephone answering device to reproduce said incoming telephone messages through said second audio reproducing circuit.

8. A telephone answering system as in claim 7 wherein said second control circuit causes said extension answering device to reproduce said incoming telephone messages without intervention of a user at said extension answering device.

9. A telephone answering system as in claim 8 , said second control circuit causing said extension telephone device to send a command to said main telephone device to stop reproduction of an outgoing message or storage of an incoming message, said first control circuit in response to receipt of said command to cause said main telephone answering device to stop reproduction of an outgoing message or storage of an incoming telephone message.

10. A telephone answering system as in claim 1 wherein said storage medium stores recorded telephone messages in mail boxes associated with respective users, and said second control circuit causes said extension answering

device to request recorded messages from said main telephone answering device from one of said mail boxes, said first control circuit in response to said request causing said main answering device to communicate incoming messages from a requested mail box to said extension answering device.

5 11. A telephone answering system as in claim 10 wherein said second control circuit causes said extension answering device to request transfer of a recorded message from one said mail box to another, said first control circuit in response to receipt of a transfer request causing said main answering device to produce said requested transfer.

10 12. A telephone answering system as in claim 1 wherein said first and second communications circuits are Bluetooth™ compliant communications circuits.

13. An extension answering device comprising:

an audio circuit for reproducing an audio output to a user;

15 a communications circuit for transmitting and receiving wireless messages directed to and received from a main telephone answering device; and

a control circuit for controlling operations at said extension telephone answering device,

20 said control circuit causing answering machine operation commands to be issued through said communications circuit to a main telephone answering

device, said control circuit being incapable of controlling the initiation of a telephone call.

14. An extension answering device as in claim 13 wherein said control circuit causes said communications circuit to wirelessly transmit an outgoing message audio input received at said audio circuit to said main telephone answering device.

15. An extension answering device as in claim 13 wherein said control circuit causes audio information received through said communications circuit during a call screening mode to be reproduced at said extension answering device without user intervention.

16. An extension answering device as in claim 13 further comprising an input device for entering answering machine operation commands, said control circuit being responsive to said entered commands for causing transmission of said entered commands by said communications circuit to said main telephone answering device.

17. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a message playback command.

18. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include an outgoing message record command.

19. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a mail box message transfer command.

20. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a stop command.

21. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a message delete command.

5 22. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a next message command.

23. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said commands include a previous message command.

10 24. An extension answering device as in claim 16 wherein said control circuit is responsive to a busy signal received by said communications circuit to provide a busy signal indication.

25. An extension answering device as in claim 13 wherein said communications circuit is Bluetooth™ compliant.

15 26. An extension answering device as in claim 25 wherein said control circuit operates said communications circuit to establish a Bluetooth™ communications link between said extension telephone answering device and said main telephone answering device.

20 27. A method of operating a telephone answering system comprising:

 establishing a wireless communications link between a main telephone answering device and at least one extension answering device; and

operating said main telephone answering device to send audio information over said link to said extension answering device at least during a call screening operation without requiring user intervention at said extension answering device.

5 28. A method as in claim 27 further comprising operating said main telephone answering device by commands issued by said extension telephone answering device, at least one of said commands being a playback command, said method further comprising transmitting playback messages from said main telephone answering device to said extension answering device in response to
10 receipt of said playback command.

 29. A method as in claim 27 further comprising answering incoming telephone calls at said main telephone answering device and transmitting the contents of said answered incoming calls to said extension answering device as part of said call screening operation.

15 30. A method as in claim 27 further comprising recording an outgoing message originated at said extension answering device at said main telephone answering device for use in answering incoming telephone calls.

 31. A method as in claim 29 further comprising transmitting an outgoing message to a telephone line at said main telephone answering device
20 when an incoming call is answered, and transmitting said outgoing message to said extension answering device as part of said call screening operation.

32. A method as in claim 28 wherein at least one of said commands is a stop command, said method further comprising stopping predetermined operations from occurring at said main telephone answering device in response to receipt of said stop command.

5 33. A method as in claim 1 wherein said wireless communications link is a Bluetooth™ communications link which is established in response to a key activation at at least one of said main telephone answering device and said extension answering device.

10 34. A method as in claim 33 further comprising establishing said Bluetooth™ communications link in response to an initial pressing of any key on a keypad of said extension answering device.

35. A method of operating an extension telephone answering device comprising:

15 establishing a wireless communications link between said extension telephone link between said extension telephone answering device and a main telephone answering device, said main telephone answering device having an associated switch hook function; and

20 controlling operations at said main telephone answering device from said extension telephone answering device without controlling said switch hook function.

36. A method of operating an extension telephone answering device comprising:

L7480.0222/P222

establishing a wireless communications link between said extension telephone answering device and a main telephone answering device coupled to a telephone line;

- 5 controlling operations at said main telephone answering device from said extension telephone answering device during a time when an active call is in progress on said telephone line and said main telephone answering device is not answering said active call.